

CLAIMS

1 1. A method, for use in a user computer system including a pointing device and a
2 visual display unit, for providing a graphical user interface to a computer program
3 for displaying search results from a search conducted in a hierarchical data set, the
4 method comprising:

5 receiving search results from a search query of a hierarchical data set; and
6 displaying on a user screen, a graphical representation parent categories for search
7 results wherein the search results appear within their respective parent categories.

1 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 selecting a parent category from the display on the user screen; and
3 displaying on the user screen a graphical representation of the search results in the
4 selected parent category in the context of the search results respective first
5 uncommon level of subcategories.

1 3. A method of presenting search results, comprising:
2 receiving search results from a database;
3 organizing the search results by category; and
4 graphically displaying a three-dimensional representation the search results within
5 at least one category icon, the category icon representing a category to which
6 search results belong, wherein the downward paths to a search result is implied by
7 graphical positioning of search results within a category icon.

1 4. The method of claim 3, further comprising:
2 representing the search results displayed within the category icon as category

- 3 member icons.
- 1 5. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
2 distinguishing between categories to which the displayed category member icons
3 by at least one of shape, color and sound, in accordance with a subcategory to
4 which less than all of the displayed category member icons within a category icon
5 belong.
- 1 6. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
2 selecting a category member icon; and
3 generating a perceptible excerpt relating to the selected category member icon
4 comprising at least one of textual, aural, imagery or video data.
- 1 7. The method of claim 3, further comprising:
2 representing the search results as a number appearing within the category icon,
3 the number representing the quantity of data elements from the search results that
4 fall within the category represented by the category icon.
- 1 8. The method of claim 3, further comprising:
2 representing on the user screen, all data elements appearing within the search
3 results.
- 1 9. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
2 A simple API comprising a category path and a URL for each data element in the
3 search result.

- 1 10. The method of claim 4 further comprising:
 - 2 displaying explicit downward path information representing the downward path
 - 3 from the displayed category to a selected data element within the displayed
 - 4 category.

- 1 11. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
 - 2 changing the appearance of a category member icon after the category member
 - 3 icon has been accessed.

- 1 12. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
 - 2 drilling out to directly access a selected category member.

- 1 13. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
 - 2 drilling down to display subcategories for a selected category.

- 1 14. The method of claim 8 further comprising:
 - 2 Zooming in to displayed category member icons;
 - 3 Enlarging the display space larger than the user display; and
 - 4 Scanning category member icons across the user screen.

- 1 15. The method of claim 3 wherein the size of the category icons is proportional to
2 the number of search results within the category.

- 1 16. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
 - 2 accessing a category icon;
 - 3 changing the appearance of the viewed icon to indicate at least one of the icon has

- 4 been access or the icon should be accessed again.
- 1 17. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
- 2 Deriving the numerical relevance rank for a search result data element from
- 3 the data element's position within a search results list; and
- 4 Displaying the data element's numerical relevance rank within the category
- 5 member icon representing the data element.
- 1 18. A method of presenting search results, comprising:
- 2 receiving search results from a database;
- 3 organizing the search results by category;
- 4 graphically displaying a three-dimensional representation the search results within
- 5 at least one category icon, the category icon representing a category to which
- 6 search results belong, wherein the downward paths to a search result is implied by
- 7 graphical positioning of search results within a category icon;
- 8 representing the search results displayed within the category icon as category
- 9 member icons; and
- 10 distinguishing between categories to which the displayed category member icons
- 11 by at least one of shape, color and sound, in accordance with a subcategory to
- 12 which less than all of the displayed category member icons within a category icon
- 13 belong.
- 1 19. A method of presenting search results, comprising:
- 2 receiving search results from a database;
- 3 organizing the search results by category;
- 4 graphically displaying a three-dimensional representation the search results within

5 at least one category icon, the category icon representing a category to which
6 search results belong, wherein the downward paths to a search result is implied by
7 graphical positioning of search results within a category icon;
8 representing the search results displayed within the category icon as category
9 member icons;
10 distinguishing between categories to which the displayed category member icons
11 by at least one of shape, color and sound, in accordance with a subcategory to
12 which less than all of the displayed category member icons within a category icon
13 belong, wherein the size of the category icons is proportional to the number of
14 search results within the category.

1 20. A method of requesting the display of search results based on the category paths
2 of the search results, the method comprising:
3 under control of a client system, displaying a search request window; and
4 in response to the entry and selection of a search request, sending the search
5 request to a server system;
6 under control of the server system, receiving the request,
7 having the search conducted by a search engine;
8 writing GUI script software capable of generating every potential arrangement of
9 matching web sites in the context of their respective parent category and
10 subcategories; and
11 downloading the GUI script software to the browser software on the client
12 system;
13 under control of the client system, displaying matching web sites in the context of
14 their respective parent categories, and
15 upon the user selecting, with a selection device, a parent category, displaying the

16 matching web sites of the selected parent category in the context of their
17 respective first uncommon level of subcategories.